Art from Europe and America, 1850-1950

Gallery 14

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Auguste Rodin
French, 1840 – 1917
Head of Balzac, 1897
bronze
Ackland Fund, 63.27.1

About the Art

- Nothing is subtle about this small head of the French author Honoré de Balzac. The profile view shows a protruding brow, nose, and mouth, and the hair falls in heavy masses.

- Auguste Rodin made this sculpture as part of a major commission for a monument to Balzac. He began working on the commission in 1891 and spent seven more years on it. Neither the head nor the body of Rodin’s sculpture conformed to critical or public expectations for a commemorative monument, including a realistic portrait likeness. Consequently, another artist ultimately got the commission.

About the Artist

1840: Born November 12 in Paris, France
1854: Began training as an artist
1871-76: Worked in Belgium
1876: Traveled to Italy
1880: Worked for the Sèvres Porcelain Manufactory; received the commission for one of his most famous works, monumental bronze doors called The Gates of Hell
1882: Met sculptor Camille Claudel, who became Rodin’s pupil, lover, and trusted studio assistant. Claudel is believed to have created whole and partial figures for The Gates of Hell
1896: His nude sculpture of the French author Victor Hugo created a scandal
1897: Made the Ackland’s Head of Balzac
1898: Exhibited his monument to Balzac and created another scandal
1917: Died November 17 in Meudon, France
Edgar Degas
French, 1834 – 1917
Spanish Dance, c. 1885, cast 1921
bronze
Ackland Fund, 74.21.1

About the Art

- The Spanish Dance retains the uneven surface of the wax model that Edgar Degas sculpted first, before the figure was cast in bronze. The surface absorbs and reflects light, suggesting the movements of the muscles in the dancer’s limbs.

- Degas’ body of work includes over 600 representations of dancing figures — paintings, drawings, and sculpted models. He made wax and mixed media statuettes of dancers as a way of studying their movement, often applying soft wax over a cork frame.

- During his career, Degas exhibited only one sculpture — Little Dancer, Aged Fourteen. It was on view for less than one month and then remained in the artist’s apartment until his death thirty-six years later. Art dealer Ambroise Vollard recalls the artist’s hesitation to show his sculptures or have them cast in bronze: “It’s a tremendous responsibility to leave anything behind in bronze — this medium is for eternity.”

About the Artist

1834: Born July 19 in Paris, France
1855-56: Attended the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris
1865: Exhibited at the official Salon in Paris
1870: Began taking an interest in dance and opera
1874: Participated in the First Impressionist Exhibition
1881: Showed Little Dancer, Aged Fourteen at the Sixth Impressionist Exhibition
c. 1885: Modeled the Ackland’s Spanish Dance
1917: Died September 26 in Paris
Gustave Courbet
French, 1819 – 1877
Roe Deer in the Snow, 1868
oil on canvas
Ackland Fund, 62.1.1
Conservation treatment for this painting, completed in 2008, was made possible by the generous support of Carol McNeel.

About the Art

- Gustave Courbet was an avid hunter and painted works like this one for patrons who shared his interests. The vantage point is that of a hunter watching animals in the distance; only the female deer has noticed. Courbet described a similar scene in a letter from 1866: “a splendid landscape of profound solitude, done deep in the valleys of my part of the world.”

- This landscape was probably executed quickly, using methods that challenged the conventions of academic painting. Courbet used a palette knife (a spatula-like instrument usually used to mix paint) to apply thick paint directly to the canvas, simulating the rough texture of the landscape.

- Courbet came from a farming family in the Franche-Comté, a region on the Swiss border of France. He spent much of his time in Paris, but continued to portray rural scenes, offering Parisian viewers realistic and unidealized views of life in the provinces.

About the Artist

1819: Born June 10 in Ornans, France
1839: Moved to Paris, France
1849: Exhibited for the first time at the Salon in Paris
1855: Independently exhibited work that was rejected from the World’s Fair in Paris
1868: Painted the Ackland’s Roe Deer in the Snow
1871: Named curator of Fine Arts under the revolutionary government, the Paris Commune
1871: Charged with the destruction of the Vendôme column in Paris and jailed
1873: Retried and ordered to pay for the cost of re-erecting the Column; moved to Switzerland to live in exile
1877: Died December 31 at La Tour-de-Peilz, near Vevey, Switzerland
About the Art

- Camille Pissarro painted with a technique commonly used by Impressionist artists. If you look closely at the sky, for example, you can see that he placed brush strokes of unmixed colors side by side rather than blending them together into a unified tone.

- This landscape is related to an 1876 series that Pissarro painted of the Oise River near his home in Pontoise, France. The Oise was open to traffic and industry, as is evident in the imagery in this painting. Masts of sailing barges and the smokestack of a steam-powered tug echo the tall chimney of the factory in the distance.

- Industrial development along the Oise began in the 1870s. Here, Pissarro balances urban and rural subject matter, showing industry as part of a peaceful summer landscape.

About the Artist

1830: Born July 10 in Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, Danish Virgin Islands
1856: Attended private classes at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, France
1859: Attended the Académie Suisse, an art school in Paris
1874: Helped organize the first Impressionist Exhibition
1875–86: Exhibited at all eight of the Impressionist exhibitions
1876: Painted the Ackland’s Banks of the Oise
1903: Died November 13 in Paris
About the Art

- Émile Bernard used similar colors to associate the woman’s face with the clouds, her head covering with the sky, and her clothing with the sea. He contrasted this color scheme with the reds, green, and browns of the land between the woman and the sea.

- She is wearing a traditional French Celtic headdress called a coiffe, the style of which would have been specific to her village.

- In a bill of sale dated 1901 Bernard noted this painting’s date and title and a description indicating that he painted it in the coastal village of Raguénez, in Brittany, on the rugged western coast of France. It depicts: “the sea, a heap of kelp, some oak trees, the head of a peasant woman in the foreground.”

- Kelp was harvested in some areas for use as fertilizer, fuel, and even fodder for animals. The prominent placement of the kelp in the painting almost makes it seem like the subject.

About the Artist

1868: Born April 28 in Lille, France
1886: Visited Normandy and Brittany, France; met fellow artists Paul Gauguin and Vincent van Gogh
1888: Worked in Pont-Aven in Brittany
1889: Exhibited paintings at the World’s Fair in Paris, France
1892: Painted the Ackland’s The Wave; organized the first French retrospective of the work of Van Gogh
1893: Travelled to Italy and then to Egypt, where he lived until 1903
1904: Returned to France
1941: Died April 15 in Paris
About the Art

- Certain landscape features in this painting by Jean Metzinger are readily recognizable, like trees, a field, a haystack, a building, and mountains. But they look less like an illusionistic view of receding space and more like a two-dimensional pattern of colors and lines. For example, Metzinger repeated the arc of a tree branch extending across the sky with the curve of the mountain.

- In an interview from about 1908, Metzinger stated, “instead of copying Nature we create a milieu of our own, wherein our sentiment can work itself out through a juxtaposition of colors.”

- In the same year he painted this landscape, Metzinger and the well-known post-Impressionist painter Paul Cézanne exhibited works in the same exhibition. Metzinger’s painting shows some similarities with Cézanne’s style, for example, in patches of color juxtaposed rather than blended, and in the use of dark outlines.

About the Artist

1883: Born June 24 in Nantes, France
1900: Studied at the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Nantes
1903: Sent three pictures to be exhibited at the Salon des Indépendants in Paris, France; moved to Paris
1904: Painted the Ackland’s Landscape
1906: Elected to a post on the hanging committee of the Salon des Indépendants
1912: Co-wrote a book about Cubism with the painter Albert Gleizes
1915-16: Served as a stretcher-bearer in World War I
1956: Died November 3 in Paris, France
John Marin
American, 1870 – 1953

*a Weehawken Sequence, No. 20*, c. 1916
oil on canvas-covered board
Ackland Fund, 60.4.2

**About the Art**

- This work is part of a series of about 100 oil sketches John Marin made between 1910 and 1916, called the *Weehawken Sequence*. The works focus on imagery of industrial New Jersey, with grain elevators and railroad tracks, the Palisades, and the Hudson River with the New York City skyline beyond.

- Marin painted this series of works outdoors. The strokes and scratched lines give the impression of an artist trying to get down the general impressions of buildings and boat traffic. The fragmented, expressive scene conveys the frenetic pace and congestion of life in a major industrial waterfront.

- Marin enhances the illusion of depth in this scene by painting the background lightly, so that the weave of the canvas is readily visible, and with lighter colors. In the foreground, he used heavier, overlapping strokes and patches of paint in darker colors.

**About the Artist**

1870: Born December 23 in Rutherford, New Jersey
1899–1901: Studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts
1901–03: Studied at the Art Students League, New York, New York
1909: Began to show work at the influential photographer and gallery owner Alfred Stieglitz’ 291 Gallery in New York
1913: Exhibited ten paintings at the International Exhibition of Modern Art, known as the Armory Show, in New York
1916: Painted the Ackland’s *Weehawken Sequence, No. 20*
1936: Became one of the first American artists given a retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in New York
1953: Died October 1 in Cape Split, Maine
About the Art

- Jack Butler Yeats began his artistic career as an illustrator for magazines and books. He first painted in watercolors and then transitioned to oil painting several years later. In the 1920s, Yeats began to develop a style characterized by thick, loose brushwork — as seen here — and expressive handling of paint.

- In representing the murky water under the bridge, Yeats painted a base of thin, parallel strokes, interrupted with perpendicular strokes and small dabs of paint that suggest the reflection of the bridge.

- Yeats believed that painters should be connected to the land they paint. His paintings, like *Canal Bridge*, depicted the places, people, and events that he encountered living in Dublin, while his writing tended to focus on the more rural areas of his childhood, like Sligo.

About the Artist

1871: Born August 29 in London, England, into a family of prominent artists and writers, including his brother, the poet William Butler Yeats.
1879–86: Lived with his grandparents at Sligo, Ireland
1887: Returned to London and attended art classes
1897: First solo exhibition, in London at Clifford Gallery
1910: Moved back to Ireland
1913: Participated in the International Exhibition of Modern Art (the Armory Show) in New York, New York
1917: Moved to Dublin, Ireland
1930: Published his most famous novel, *Sligo*
1932: Painted the Ackland’s *Canal Bridge*
1939: Appointed as a governor of the National Gallery of Ireland
1957: Died March 28 in Dublin
About the Art

- In *Tree Forms* Arthur Dove transforms tree trunks and leaves into swelling, biomorphic curves and jagged lines that vibrate with energy. Through compositional cropping and a close-up angle — two techniques popular in photography of the time — Dove challenged the conventions of traditional landscape painting.

- Inside the serrated boundaries of the leaf-like forms, Dove applied delicate, feathery brush marks that surround bands of green and brown hues. The combination of the colors with their irregular edges creates an effect of reverberation.

- Dove was part of Alfred Stieglitz’s pioneering circle of modern American artists. Between 1912 and 1946, he had annual one-man exhibitions at Stieglitz’s galleries in New York City. *Tree Forms* does not appear in any records for those shows, but an inscription on the back of the painting in Stieglitz’s hand reads: “Tree Forms — 1932/Arthur G. Dove.” This painting is still in the original frame that the artist selected for it.

About the Artist

1880: Born August 2 in Canandaigua, New York
1903: Moved to New York, New York to work as a freelance illustrator
1907-09: Lived in France
1912: Participated in first of 34 annual one-man exhibitions at Alfred Stieglitz’s 291 gallery in New York
1924: Married painter Helen Torr
1932: Painted the Ackland’s *Tree Forms*
1933: Moved back to his childhood farm in Geneva, New York
1938: Returned to Long Island, New York, settling in an abandoned post office
1946: Died November 23 in Huntington, New York
Hale Aspacio Woodruff
American, 1900 – 1980
Landscape (Mississippi, Soil Erosion), c. 1944
oil on canvas
Ackland Fund, 2013.6

About the Art

• In July 1943, Hale Woodruff received a fellowship of $2,400 from the Julius Rosenwald Foundation “to pursue individual creativity in art.” He traveled through Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi documenting social and environmental issues in the rural South, such as the landscape with eroded soil seen here.

• In addition to showing soil erosion, Woodruff shows decaying vegetation. He paints some trees with leaves, such as those on the painting’s right side, a bare trunk in the back, and a fallen tree at the bottom of the canvas, blending in with the color of the earth around it.

• Two other works of art by Woodruff depict similar landscapes: one of those is a pastel in the collection of the North Carolina Central University Art Museum in Durham, North Carolina, and the other is a painting in the Mississippi Museum of Art in Jackson.

About the Artist

1900: Born August 26 in Cairo, Illinois
1931: In Paris, France, worked with American artist Henry Ossawa Tanner
1931-45: Taught at Atlanta University in Georgia
1936: In Mexico City, Mexico, studied with Diego Rivera
1943: Received a Julius Rosenwald Foundation fellowship
c. 1944: Painted the Ackland’s Landscape
1945–68: Taught at the Harlem Community Art Center, directed by sculptor Augusts Savage, and at New York University in New York, New York
1980: Died September 6 in New York

Chat with this work of art using ARTBOT. Instructions available in the Museum lobby.
About the Art

- Diaphanous circles and curvilinear shapes appear to move and float, overlapping and comingling in an imaginary, otherworldly environment. Although various forms are shaded, indicating mass and weight, the color of each changes as they intersect, obscuring the progression of space and creating a mutable illusion of depth.

- Nearly twenty years after he painted this work, Raymond Jonson wrote about it in a letter:

  I believe one might interpret certain items as symbolic, such as the interplay between the many circles or transparent spheres, and the curvilinear. Do they not suggest ethereal material in space in the act of becoming formed into matter?

- This work belongs to Jonson’s Cosmic Theme series, which consisted of seven paintings created from 1936 to 1941 that explored Jonson’s interests in astronomy.

About the Artist

1891: Born July 18 in Chariton, Iowa
1924: Moved to Santa Fe, New Mexico
1934: Began teaching at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque
1936: Began a series of paintings called Cosmic Theme
1937: Painted the Ackland’s Cosmic Theme No. Three
1938: Started to paint with a spray gun; co-founded the Transcendental Painting Group
1954: Retired from teaching at the University of New Mexico
1969: Met abstract painter Ilya Bolotowsky while Bolotowsky was a visiting professor at the University of New Mexico
1970: Curated an exhibition of Bolotowsky’s work
1982: Died May 10 in Albuquerque, New Mexico
About the Art

- Vivid hues of orange, blue, and red contrast with the pale tones of lavender and white, the opposing shades held together by interludes of mustard green. Carefully arranged, the vertical and horizontal shapes meet at right angles to create a balanced and dynamic grid of rectangles, squares, and triangles.

- After seeing the structured, grid-based work of Dutch artist Piet Mondrian in 1933, Ilya Bolotowsky abandoned his use of biomorphic abstract forms in favor of Neoplasticism, a style conceived by Mondrian. Neoplasticism stressed completely abstract and nonobjective representation through the use right angles to create relationships that could be both tense and harmonious.

- In 1947 Bolotowsky altered the orientation of his canvases. According to him:

> The edge of the canvas is very important...with...a diamond shape, the shapes truncated by these formats are inclined to continue and to complete themselves as regular shapes beyond the canvas...And so the active area of the diamond format canvas is larger psychologically than it is physically, which is something gained.

- The American Abstract Artists Association, to which Bolotowsky belonged, encouraged the ideas and work of abstract artists through support and exhibition opportunities at a time when representational art was dominant in the United States.

About the Artist

1907: Born July 1 in St. Petersburg, Russia
1923: Immigrated to New York, New York
1924–30: Studied at the National Academy of Design in New York
1936: Became a founding member of the American Abstract Artists Association
1946: Taught at Black Mountain College, North Carolina
1953: Painted the Ackland’s *Golden Diamond*
1974: Was celebrated in a retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum in New York
1981: Died November 22 in New York
About the Art

- The vividly colored forms in Louis Stone’s painting are distinguished from one another with contrasting colors, well-defined borders, and in several cases, patterns of dots, dashes, or lines.

- In 1950, the year that he painted this work, Stone and his wife took an extended trip to Guanajuato, Mexico, with their friend, the artist Bill Ney. Following their return, Stone began to use vibrant colors in controlled, spatially organized patterns.

About the Artist

1902: Born in Findlay, Ohio
1919-20: Attended the Art Academy of Cincinnati in Ohio
1926-27: Studied at the Art Students League in New York, New York
1927-33: Lived in Europe, mostly Southern France
1935: Moved to Lambertville, New Jersey
1935-38: Worked for the federal program, the Works Progress Administration’s Easel Division
1939: Exhibited in the United States Pavilion at the New York World’s Fair
1950: Made the Ackland’s painting
1984: Died in Lambertville, New Jersey
About the Art

- The male figure in Rose Piper’s painting combines elements of abstraction and realism. Although his proportions are exaggerated and his skin is several shades of green, Piper took care to make his fingers gripping the train car, his facial features, and the texture of his hair more realistic.

- Slow Down Freight Train is one of a series of fourteen paintings related to African American folk and blues music. Its inspiration is Trixie Smith’s recording of Freight Train Blues, a song about the Great Migration (1913-46), when many Black people moved from the rural South to the urban industrial North in search of economic opportunity and escape from the Jim Crow South. In Piper’s painting a man grieves, perhaps for his loved ones, his community, or a way of life left behind.

- In a 1990 letter to former Ackland director Charles Millard, Piper said that her painting is: “a woman’s plea for the train to slow down so that she might go along with her man.” The scene, then, is depicted from the woman’s vantage point (whether that woman is the painter or an imagined viewer) as she watches the man climb aboard the train.

About the Artist

1917: Born in the Bronx, New York
1940: BA from Hunter College with an art major and geometry minor
1943–46: Studied at the Art Students League, New York, New York
1946–47: Painted the Ackland’s Slow Down, Freight Train; won two consecutive fellowships from the Rosenwald Foundation
1947: First one-woman show, in New York at the Roko Gallery
1948: Won first prize in Atlanta University’s Annual Exhibition for Contemporary Negro Artists
1989: Solo show in New York, at the Phelps Stokes Fund
2005: Died in Connecticut

Listen to music related to this artwork with the Look & Listen Gallery Soundtrack. Visit [www.ackland.org/listen](http://www.ackland.org/listen) to access the playlist.
Albert Gleizes  
French, 1881 – 1953  
*Composition*, 1921  
oil on panel  
Ackland Fund, 69.27.1  
Conservation treatment for this painting, completed in 1991, was made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

### About the Art

- In *Composition*, Albert Gleizes portrays a seated figure by layering a series of geometric, interlocking shapes to suggest a face, hair, and arms. This layering, together with the arrangement of verticals, horizontals, and diagonals, conveys an impression of the figure moving in space.

- The wood surface on which Gleizes painted *Composition* is plywood and over time it warped. Since attempting to flatten the panel would have damaged the painted surface, the Museum instead had a cradle built to support the curved surface.

- Gleizes came from an artistic family. His father Sylvan Gleizes was a successful fabric designer and amateur painter. His maternal uncle, Léon Commerre, was painter who had won the French artists’ academy’s Rome Prize in 1875. Another uncle, Robert Gleizes, was an art collector and dealer.

### About the Artist

1881: Born December 8 in Paris, France  
1902: First exhibited at the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, Paris  
1903: First exhibited at the Salon d’Automne in Paris  
1911: Exhibited at the Salon des Indépendants in Paris  
1912: Co-wrote *Du Cubisme* with Jean Metzinger  
1921: Painted the Ackland’s *Composition*  
1939: Moved to St. Remy-de-Provence, France  
1953: Died June 23 in Avignon, France
About the Art

- Amédée Ozenfant stripped away details, transforming Sisteron into the essence of a town in the south of France rather than portraying the specific place. Flat geometric planes, painted using tints and shades of burnt sienna and set against a muted blue sky, emphasize the mass of the architectural forms.

- Between 1918 and 1928, the artist made a number of paintings of Sisteron, town with pre-Roman origins, constructed in a narrow gap between two mountain ranges. Scholars have found it difficult to place these paintings in chronological order, hence the exact date of the Ackland’s painting is not known.

About the Artist

1886: Born April 15 in Saint-Quentin, Aisne, in northern France
1905: Travelled to Paris, France, and studied at the Académie de la Palette
1910-13: Lived in Russia, where he married artist Zina de Klingberg
1913: Returned to Paris; worked at the propaganda department during World War I
1919-28: Painted the Ackland’s Sisteron
1920-25: With Le Corbusier, became director and owner of a journal, L’Esprit nouveau
1939: Moved to New York, New York and became the head of the Ozenfant School of Fine Arts
1944: Became an American citizen
1953: Renaturalized as a French citizen
1966: Died May 4 in Cannes, France
Niles Spencer
American, 1893 – 1952
Farm Buildings, 1922-26
oil on canvas
Burton Emmett Collection, 58.1.244
Conservation treatment for this painting, completed in 1997, was made possible by a grant from the Pforzheimer Foundation.

About the Art

• To create a rough texture in the grass at the bottom of the picture and in the trees, Niles Spencer glued sand to the canvas.

• During a trip to Paris, Spencer became interested in Cubism, but after a while he returned to painting New England landscapes. Farm Buildings shows his new style, in which he portrayed recognizable subjects, with flattened, geometric shapes. He wanted to reveal the beauty of rural and urban structures — grime, noise, harshness and all — without nostalgia or sentimentality.

• A stamp on the back of the canvas suggests that Spencer bought it while he was in Paris and brought it back to the United States, where he painted Farm Buildings.

About the Artist

1893: Born May 16 in Pawtucket, Rhode Island
1913-15: Studied at the Rhode Island School of Design
1915-17: Studied at the Ferrer School in New York, New York
1921: Traveled abroad, visiting Paris, the northern coast of France, and England
1922-26: Painted the Ackland’s Farm Buildings
1923–30: Painted at the artists’ colony in Provincetown, Massachusetts
1937: Won a National Mural Competition for the Post Office in Aliquippa, Pennsylvania
1952: Died May 15 in Dingmans Ferry, Pennsylvania
attributed to the Teague Family
American, North Carolina, Randolph and Moore
Counties, 20th century
Grave Marker for James R. Teague, 1938
salt-glazed stoneware
Gift of Charles G. Zug, III, 84.42.1

About the Art

• To make salt glazes, potters throw salt into a kiln that has reached a very high
temperature. The heat changes the solid salt into a gas that surrounds the stoneware
pots. The sodium from the salt melts the silica (glass) in the clay body to make a pebbly
surface and sometimes drips along the sides of a vessel. The surface may be shades of
gray, green, or brown.

• The inscription on the top of this grave marker lists the name of the person buried
(James R. Teague), his birth and death dates, and his exact age when he died: 54 years,
5 months, and 24 days. It was originally placed in the cemetery of the Union Grove
Church in Randolph County, North Carolina.

• Durable, inexpensive stoneware grave markers were once common in certain regions
of the Southeast. Over time, however, they were bound to suffer from accidental
damage or vandalism, and few survive today. This one was stolen from its original
site and eventually turned up with an art dealer. When the donor (a specialist in North
Carolina pottery) found it, he immediately offered it to the Union Grove Church, but the
church declined to take it back.
About the Art

- Three bizarre hybrid human-insects are perched on a fence railing in an extensive landscape.
- Although this image may suggest a connection to the main character in Franz Kafka’s haunting 1915 novella *Metamorphosis* (a man who wakes up transformed into a beetle), there is no evidence that the Czech-German author was aware of Ensor’s print.
- Drypoint etchings are made by directly incising a copper plate with a sharp drawing instrument. This process creates a variety of lines and darker areas where the printing ink adheres to the raised burr left by the needle.
- Ensor’s French title (*Insectes Singuliers*) has also been translated as “Strange Insects” or “Peculiar Insects.”
- This is one of 133 etchings and drypoints made by Ensor during his career, 86 of which were produced in the period 1886-1891.
- The print was prompted by a poem by the German romantic poet Heinrich Heine (1797-1856), in which a melancholy beetle declares his love for a fly. The central figure is actually a self-portrait of the artist, with the body of a beetle. The dragonfly to the left appears to have the profile of Mariette, the young wife of the botanist Ernest Rousseau, the rector of the Free University in Brussels and a mentor to the artist. Ensor was infatuated with Mariette. The louse to the right has not been identified, and neither has the form in the window of an upper story in the building at right, which may be another insect.

About the Artist

1860: Born on April 13 in Ostende, Belgium
1877-80: Studied at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Brussels, Belgium
1883: Co-founded Les XX (The Twenty) in Brussels, an independent artist group opposed to official art policy and institutions, and was a member until 1893
1888: Made the Ackland’s print
1895: Had his first solo exhibition, in Brussels
1929: Was elevated to a baronetcy by the Belgian king
1949: Died on November 19 in Ostend
About the Art

- Van Gogh made this psychologically penetrating portrait, his only etching, just six weeks before his death.

- The sitter is Dr. Paul-Ferdinand Gachet, a homeopathic physician who cared for the artist after he left the asylum in Saint-Remy. Gachet was himself an amateur etcher and provided the artist with materials and access to a printing press.

- In June 1890, the artist wrote to his sister: “I have found a true friend in Dr. Gachet, something like another brother, so much do we resemble each other physically and also mentally.”

- This impression is one of several dozen printed by Dr. Gachet’s son, probably in the 1920s, who placed his stamp with the cat design at lower center.

- The date, May 25, 1890, at upper left was probably inscribed later in drypoint by Dr. Gachet. The actual date the print was made was almost certainly June 15, 1890, after a Sunday lunch at the doctor’s house.

About the Artist

1853: Born on March 30 in Zundert, The Netherlands  
1869-1873: Moved to London, England to work for an art dealer  
1877-79: Studied to be, and worked as, a protestant pastor and missionary  
1880-81: Took up art  
1886: Moved to Paris, France  
1887: Befriended the artist Paul Gauguin (1848-1903)  
1888: Moved to Arles in the south of France  
1889: After episodes of mania and delirium, voluntarily entered an asylum at Saint-Remy in Provence.  
1890: Was invited to exhibit with Les XX, the avant-garde painters group in Brussels, Belgium, made the Ackland’s etching, and died on July 29 in Auvers-sur-Oise, France
About the Art

- Casein is a kind of paint derived from the milk protein casein. It dries to an even, matte, relatively inflexible surface.

- Although this composition may evoke an abstract landscape, the array of variously colored and decorated forms projecting in a shallow space does also reflects the artist’s earlier interest in non-objective relief sculpture.

- The prevalence of organic and curvilinear forms in this work, as well as the color palette of yellows, prinks, browns and creams, make this a somewhat unusual work in the artist’s oeuvre.

About the Artist

1904: Born in Brooklyn, New York
1930s: Made non-objective relief sculptures
1936: Was a founding member of the American Abstract Artists group. 1945: Created the Ackland’s work
1951: Had her first solo exhibition at Grave Borgenicht Gallery, New York City 1956: Died on November 25 in New York City
About the Art

• This work shows forms characteristic of the last fifteen years of the artist’s career: vertically oriented periscope-like and ladder-like forms apparently casting diverse shadows in an atmospheric space divided into three bands.

• This work is untitled, but titles of paintings with closely related compositions include *The Circumnavigation of the Sphering of the Poles* (1964, National Gallery of Art) and *The Celestial Gate Sways on the Ringing Swells* (1961, Smithsonian American Art Museum).

• In a 1950 statement, the artist wrote “My philosophy is the reality of light and space; an ever flowing--never-ceasing--continuity, unfettered by manmade machinery, weight and external likenesses. I use geometric symbols because they represent structural essences and contain infinite possibilities of change and dynamics.”

• The artist understood the three sections of the “background” in a composition like this as representing the earth below, the sky above, and a “plain [sic] of infinity” between them, allowing the illusion of light from beyond the horizon line.

About the Artist

1902: Born on August 5 in Chelsea, Massachusetts
1927: Enrolled in night classes and the Art Students League in New York City
1931: Visited Europe and North Africa
1935: Helped found the Bauhaus-like Design Laboratory, a cooperative school of industrial design
1937: Began making wholly abstract works, experimenting in the subsequent decades with unconventional materials, including plastic, gold-leaf, radium paints, and layered glass surfaces.
1951: Had retrospective at Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City and published *Light and the New Reality*, the first of numerous philosophical books and treatises written in the last decade of her life
1960: Created the Ackland’s gouache
1971: Died on January 11 in Marbella, Spain
About the Art

- Mostly known for more stylized, sleeker portrait heads produced later in his career, the artist here has given the surface of the sensitively rendered head an expressive, obviously hand-worked treatment. The edge of a modeling tool has been used to incise the eyebrows and the hairline.

- The noted art historian and critic David Driskell wrote that William Artis “has not attempted to solve problems with his art but has seen beyond those obstacles often binding the human spirit. He has encountered through his art the meaning of a universal world” (1971).

- The base of this sculpture was probably made by the artist himself.

About the Artist

1914: Born Washington, North Carolina
1914: Born February 2 in Washington, North Carolina
1927: Moved to New York, New York
1930s: Studied privately with Augusta Savage and at the Art Students League with Robert Laurent, both major sculptors in the Harlem Renaissance
1935: Made the Ackland’s Head of a Boy
1947: Awarded a Rosenwald fellowship to study with Ivan Mestrovic at Syracuse University in New York
1954–1965: Taught at Nebraska state Teachers College
1966–1975: Taught at Mankato State College, Minnesota
1971: Retrospective exhibition at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee
1977: Died April 3 in Northport, New York